

Heeding the Call

GIB Honors First Responders



GVRA



GEORGIA VOCATIONAL
REHABILITATION AGENCY

October 2017

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Cookout Honors First Responders

Georgia Industries for the Blind Gives Back

On October 3rd, Georgia Industries for the Blind (GIB) held its first appreciation luncheon for emergency responders at the Bainbridge manufacturing facility.

Grilled hotdogs, baked beans, coleslaw, chips and refreshments were served to over 50 first responders from a variety of agencies including Public Safety, Decatur County Sheriff's Department, Decatur County EMS, the Criminal Investigation Division and the Decatur County Fire and Rescue.

GIB, one of the five Statutory Programs under the Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency, has been providing employment to people who are blind or have other disabilities in Bainbridge since 1949.

"It is an honor and privilege for GIB to be able to sponsor an event such as this for the emergency responders in our area. Emergency responders are a vital stabilizing force in all communities," said GIB Co-Director Mike Jackson. "They are like the unsung heroes who chose a profession that puts their lives at risk on a daily basis, and we just wanted to show our appreciation for their service".

The cookout provided a platform for GIB employees to interact with first responders and get to know those who may one day come to their aid in case of an emergency.

"Living in a small community like Bainbridge, it is nice to know those folks that risk their lives to protect and provide emergency services to all of us," said GIB Co-Director Luis Narimatsu. "We are very thankful for each and every one of them."

Decatur County Sheriff Willey Griffin said,

"We really appreciate the support the community has given us, The Industries for the Blind, it means a lot to us to share a meal with them, especially our citizens here in Decatur County. You know these are trying times in our nation, and for you all to do this it means a lot to us here in the law enforcement and by all means, we appreciate it. Thanks so much for doing this. We want to always pray for our officers and men and women that are in law enforcement. It's a tough job, and we appreciate what you all do in supporting us."

GIB would like to thank all first responders as well as those who were able to share with us and make this year's cookout a success. GIB hopes for an even larger turnout at next year's event.



A Month of Celebration On NDEAM and Our Organization

As many of you know, October is designated National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM). While this is an annual awareness campaign usually observed by the sharing of facts, educational information and proclamations -- for us at GVRA -- it's the embodiment of our very mission and calling.

The history of NDEAM traces back to 1945, when Congress enacted a law declaring the first week in October each year "National Employ the Physically Handicapped Week". In 1962, the word "physically" was removed to acknowledge the employment needs and contributions of individuals with all types of disabilities. In 1988, Congress expanded the week to a month and changed the name to National Disability Employment Awareness Month.

This year's theme is "Inclusion Drives Innovation". Our work at GVRA depends on both inclusion and innovation being woven

into the very fabric of our culture. We are at our best when our own workforce and the state's workforce benefits from the wisdom and life experiences of diverse groups of people, including those with disability. To help those we serve live up to their career potential, we must always be innovative in the way we seek opportunity and create opportunity for others.

Reflecting this year's theme, GVRA is engaging in a variety of activities throughout the month so we can learn together and reiterate our commitment to a fully inclusive Georgia. Look for news and resources in your email and on social media, and as always, thank you for your dedication to career opportunities for Georgians with disabilities.



GVRA Executive Director



Inclusion *drives* Innovation

**NATIONAL DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT
AWARENESS MONTH**
#NDEAM

 OFFICE OF DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT POLICY
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
dol.gov/odep



Making the Most of NDEAM

Make It the Best One Yet

Every year, the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) establishes a theme for National Disability Employment Awareness Month. This year's theme is "Inclusion Drives Innovation," both foundational principles at GVRA.

It's vital for clients, employees and advocates alike to show their support for this month and what it represents. Here are some ideas to help recognize NDEAM in your community.

- * Display an NDEAM poster, which are being mailed to all local offices and program sites, at your location for both coworkers and clients to see. You can also download the poster yourself at <https://www.dol.gov/odep/topics/ndeam/resources.htm>.

- * Take a moment to review and share basic disability etiquette with your coworkers. These recommendations from Easter Seals are a great starter: <http://www.easterseals.com/explore-resources/facts-about-disability/disability-etiquette.html>

- * When reposting appropriate disability-related social media, use the hashtag #NDEAM to help heighten visibility.

- * Make the Office of Communications and Marketing aware of any local events in which you're participating and share pictures the team can distribute on social media and in the GVRA newsletter.

- * If you work in a local office, collaborate with the appropriate coworkers to make classroom presentations in the area school-system.

- * Share a new success story this month to

highlight a client's achievement or the contributions of an employer that excels with diversity.

- * Use the sample proclamation below to ask a local Mayor, County Commission Chair or other leader to support NDEAM -- and let the Office of Communications and Marketing know so we can share the news with others!

Sample Proclamation:

Workplaces welcoming of the talents of all people, including people with disabilities, are a critical part of our efforts to build an inclusive community and strong economy. In this spirit, the <CITY OF/STATE OF (NAME)> is recognizing National Disability Employment Awareness Month this October to raise awareness about disability employment issues and celebrate the many and varied contributions of people with disabilities. Activities during this month will reinforce the value and talent people with disabilities add to our workplaces and communities and affirm <CITY'S/STATE'S> commitment to an inclusive community.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, _____ do hereby proclaim October 2017 as National Disability Employment Awareness Month. In so doing, I call upon employers, schools and other community organizations in <CITY/STATE> to observe this month with appropriate programs and activities, and to advance its important message that people with disabilities are equal to the task throughout the year.



Floyd Cox Retires

He's Had 29 Years with the State of Georgia

After nearly three decades of services with the state—and 19 years with Disability Adjudication Services—Computer Operations Manager Floyd Cox retired at the end of September.

"I've known Floyd for fifteen years, and he has converted everything from the paper process to the computer process. He's a really great source of information and knowledge, not just for DAS, but also for SSA," said Disability Program Administrator Gary Noone. "He participates in several different national workgroups and infrastructure discussions, and he's always a

go to person. He identifies problems and comes up with solutions and shares them with his counterparts."

DAS Director Rita McWhorter had similar praise for Floyd.

"Floyd is helpful to everyone and a genuine resource every time we have a question or a need related to the systems here. We'll be able to fill his position, but we certainly won't be able to replace him," she said. "I'm sure we'll still be seeing him around the DAS family even though he's retired."





Pictured above: Some of the 20-plus veterans in attendance at BlazeSports recent golf outing practice their strokes.

Pictured below: (L-R) Duane Morrow, BlazeSports Board Chairman; Cynthia Frisina, BlazeSports Executive Director; Sean; Kevin Perry, Georgia Beverage Association



Supporting Our Partners

GVRA Partner BlazeSports Hits the Links

GVRA Partner BlazeSports America recently held an event for disabled veterans at Stone Mountain Golf Club, and GVRA staff were on hand to support their efforts.

The event was double purposed for an on-air segment for Headline Sports.

At hole one, Hines Ward, former UGA player and wide receiver for the Pittsburgh Steelers, and current HLN host, interviewed five veterans golfing with Blaze Sports, and at hole two, he joined them on the green. The veterans played nine holes and then returned to the club house for social time and dinner. Around 20 veterans participated, with about 200 total golfing.

"We admire the work BlazeSports does for veterans who have served so bravely and selflessly," said GVRA Executive Director Sean T. Casey. "Recreation and sports are good for both the body and the soul. To see these men and women come together and enjoy an afternoon."

GVRA is committed, Sean said, to providing a spectrum of services to veterans and looks forward to ongoing work with BlazeSports.

"BlazeSports America was thrilled to welcome Hines Ward, former two-time Super Bowl champion and Sports Contributor for CNN Sports and HLN, to our Veterans Adaptive Golf Program on Monday, September 25th at the Stone Mountain Golf Club. BlazeSports America, nonprofit legacy of the 1996 Atlanta Paralympic Games, is committed to providing youth and veterans with physical disabilities opportunities to become more physically active through adaptive sports and recreation programs leading to improved employability, academic performance and increased community re-integration," said Cynthia Frisina, Executive Director of BlazeSports. "We are grateful to GVRA for their ongoing support of our Veterans initiatives and the positive impact it makes in transforming lives."



GVRS Board Member Spotlight

Featuring Vice Chair Tom Wilson

Editor's Note: In this section, we'll be doing monthly profiles of each of the Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Services board members.



Tom Wilson retired as manager of the Athens Unit, Vocational Rehabilitation Program for the Georgia Department of Labor.

Georgia Rehabilitation Association Professional Achievement Award and the Georgia Rehabilitation Association Citation Award.

Wilson earned a bachelor's degree from Georgia College and State University and a master's degree from the University of Georgia.

He and his wife, Cathie, have two children and four grandchildren. They reside in Franklin Springs.

Following his retirement, Wilson worked an additional five years as a part-time rehabilitation counselor. He previously served as president of the Georgia Chapter and the National Rehabilitation Counseling Association and as president of the Georgia and National Rehabilitation Associations.

Wilson is a current member of the Franklin Springs City Council and is a fellow of the National Rehabilitation Counseling Association. He is also a recipient of the

"In my tenure as a board member, I hope to see the GVRA live up to its lofty goals in assisting individuals with disabilities to become employed by fostering a culture of staff development and life-long learning and encouraging each team member to achieve their highest for the benefit of the people we serve," Wilson said.

DAS Employee of the Month

Submitted by Laverne Williams

I am pleased to nominate Elizabeth Mane as employee of the month. Elizabeth was assigned to unit 48 April 2017 as an associate adjudicator. Elizabeth worked persistently and diligently on her caseload size, and was successfully promoted to an adjudicator as of July 1 2017.

She takes pride in her work and works very hard on each case. She processes each case meticulously and has a great relationship with the medical consultants. Elizabeth has

gone above and beyond on many cases to ensure that the claimants receive a fair and accurate decision. She has a strong knowledge of POMS and readily assists other adjudicators in the unit.

She has proven to be a great asset to the unit and agency. It is an honor to nominate Elizabeth Mane as employee of the month.



BEP Happenings

The Business Enterprise Program Stays Busy

BEP is pleased to announce the opening of a new micro market location at the FBI Building located in Chamblee. It will be managed by blind Vendor Manager Deloris Butler; watch for the grand opening date coming soon.

BEP has been awarded the military dining facility contract for another five years at Warner Robins Airforce Base. The award is partially due to the quality service provided by the Blind Vendor Manager Jim Howard, who is consistently a finalist for the

Hennessy Award (award for best Air Force dining facility).

BEP is proud to recognize Georgia's first Blind Vendor Manager Phyllis Campbell to solely run her own micro market under the auspice of the BEP. Phyllis Campbell has taken over the Federal Aviation Administration micro market where she will provide all vending snacks and fresh products. Given the growth of micro market opportunities, Georgia is proud to be at the forefront of this trend.

Georgia Grown

How GVRA is Getting in on the Action

Georgia Industries for the Blind is one of several vendors statewide who will soon be producing apparel and other items bearing the Georgia Grown logo.

The new wares will be debuted in several weeks at the Sunbelt Ag Expo in Moultrie, and that's just the beginning, said GIB Co-Director Mike Jackson.

The Georgia Grown program is a marketing and economic development program of the Georgia Department of Agriculture. Our No. 1 goal is to aid our agricultural economies by bringing together producers, processors, suppliers, distributors, retailers, agritourism and consumers in one powerful, statewide community. We're here to help new agribusinesses grow, and established agribusinesses thrive.

According to the initiative's website, "Georgia Grown is also a brand with deep roots in sustainability, quality and integrity. The

Georgia Grown brand is desired by business and consumers who want to buy and promote Georgia's locally grown products."

This will not only expand GIB's product line, Jackson said, but it will demonstrate the organization's commitment to producing quality products that are made in state.



Down to Brass Tacks

The New Business Processes

VR teams have been hard at work building the new framework for how GVRA interacts with its clients. The purpose of the Business Process Mapping was to create an efficient and effective business process to better meet the needs of our clients and increase the number of successful outcomes for them. The new business processes address the three major components of service delivery (referral and intake, vocational planning and implementation, and employment) as well as supportive services such as Assistive Work Technology, State Coordinators, Transition, and Roosevelt Warm Springs/Cave Springs.

The teams that developed the new processes were comprised of both field staff and members of leadership. The teams were challenged to “think outside of the box” and to detail the processes which were necessary and remove those which were not. The efficient and effective processes which were developed are not

only being used to train current staff, but will also be utilized to train new staff for the foreseeable future.

In addition to added efficiency and effectiveness for the agency, the new processes also create consistency in agency processes for our clients across the state. Although the composition of field staff teams varies from office to office, the new processes identify the specific tasks which need to be completed as well as which team members can perform those tasks. The new business processes will assist staff to understand their responsibilities and will also be an excellent tool for use by Team Leads in making decisions about how to best meet the needs of each client based on the current resources in their team.

*Written by Director of VR Field Services
Lauren Knox*



Deputy Executive Director Kevin Harris speaks at a new-hire orientation in October.

Policy Repository Launches

Policies Now Accessible to All Employees

Beginning October 1st, agency policies will be accessible to all employees, as housed under the NAVEX Policy Tech system. This agency-wide policy repository will include the VR Client Services Policy Manual used to guide staff in serving clients and other program policies as they become available for inclusion in the system.

The purpose of the system is to make it easier for employees to find policies and forms which they may need. Login information for NAVEX and a direct link to NAVEX will be emailed to all employees in the coming days. The NAVEX system will also allow supervisors to see which employees have acknowledged reading policies relevant to their job duties. Supervisors will also have the option to create quizzes to see how well employees have understood the policies they

have read.

The system will also allow GVRA to track changes to the policies, archive older versions of the policies and allow authorized employees to edit policies. Along with implementing NAVEX, GVRA is implementing procedures relating to creating/amending policies. This will allow a standing committee to convene when there is a proposed policy or an amendment to a policy that may affect other departments, offices or programs.

This committee will ensure that all affected departments are in agreement with the final version of the policy. Employees will be able to read the most up-to-date version of the policies at any time on NAVEX.

Calendar of Events

BEP Vendor Training

October 6-8

5993 Peachtree Industrial Blvd
Norcross, GA 30092

GVRA Leadership Summit

November 6-8

1 Resort Drive
Savannah, GA 31421

Quarterly New Manager Training

October 10-12

200 Piedmont Avenue
Atlanta, GA 30334

New Hire Orientation

November (Date TBD)

200 Piedmont Avenue
Atlanta, GA 30334

White Cane Day

October 18

739 West Peachtree Street
Atlanta, GA 30308



Friday Night Lights

GVRA Employee Calls the Big Game



Editor's Note: We're starting a new section in the newsletter that will feature the unique talents of GVRA employees. This month's installment features Employment Specialist Troup Brinson who is the voice of the Swainsboro High School Tigers football and basketball teams on the local radio station.

People around Swainsboro may not recognize Troup Brinson just by running into him on the street. But then he starts to talk, and a light comes on.

Troup—who works as an Employment Specialist out of the Swainsboro Office—has been broadcasting Swainsboro High School football games on 97.1 FM The Rocket for the past 12 years, and as a result, he has become a local celebrity of sorts.

"I've been talking with somebody, and they kind of look at me funny and say I sound so

familiar. They kind of get a kick out of it because they feel like they know you," Troup said. "They want to talk about football. It's sometimes hard not to talk football for an hour. It's funny the way it works especially in a small community."

The way Troup came to be the voice of the SHS Tigers is something out of a movie. One Friday night—more than a decade ago—he was walking by the press box before a game. On that night, as fate would have it, the color commentator was out, and Troup was asked if he wanted to help out.

For nine years, he'd play that role, dissecting different plays and filling in the gaps between the play-by-play announcer's running commentary. Three years ago, his role changed. His longtime partner retired, and Troup was then tasked with calling the game, which was a challenge at first, considering he was in the booth alone.

"It's easier with a good partner," he said. "They can give you a break. It's a long game, and it can be exhausting talking the whole time."

All in all, Troup said, the opportunity to call football games—as well as playoff basketball games—has made him a better communicator when talking to clients, businesses and his coworkers. In addition, it has given him the opportunity to stay connected with the team and with the community at large.

"When I started doing the radio, it gave me a reason to stay invested and connected with the school, and now I have two boys there," he said. "It's good to be able to talk to folks in the community about it. It really makes it worth it, and I'm glad I get to do it."



Get to Know a Legislator

This Month We Feature Rep. Debbie Buckner



A native Georgian, Rep. Buckner grew up in Columbus and lived there until she married and moved to Talbot County in 1976. She was first elected to the Georgia General Assembly in

2002 and is currently serving in House District 137.

Rep. Buckner serves as a member of the Ways and Means, Natural Resources & Environment, Retirement, and State Institutions & Property committees.

As a freshman legislator, she served as secretary of the State Institutions & Properties Committee, a member of the Health & Human Services Committee, and was the only freshman to serve on the Natural Resources & Environment Water Subcommittee.

She has served as an assistant to the Majority Whip and then as assistant to the Minority Whip. She was the House Democratic Caucus Secretary and currently serves as Vice Chair of the Rural Caucus. Rep. Buckner is the Former Director of Community Benefit at Columbus Regional Healthcare System, having previously worked for Doctors Hospital as the Director

of Community Relations and the Columbus Health Department as Senior Public Health Educator.

She earned a BS Degree in Health Science from Columbus State University and attended Georgia Southwestern College for postgraduate work and to earn a teaching certificate.

Rep. Buckner is a Board Member of Twin Cedars, which provides programs and services to children and their families in Columbus, LaGrange and Macon, is currently serving as Board Chair of Three Rivers AHEC, a Board Member and Past Chairman of the West Central Georgia Cancer Coalition, a member of the Network for Professionals and Executives, member of the Chattahoochee Indian Heritage Association Board and serves as member of the Easter Seals Board and the Safe Kids of Columbus Board.

Her community service has included volunteering for the American Lung Association of Georgia, Columbus-Ft. Benning Chapter of the American Cancer Society, Girl Scouts, Columbus Hospice, the Jekyll Island Foundation, the Valley Collaborative for Suicide Prevention and Historic Talbotton Foundation.

Representative Buckner is married to Mike Buckner, and they live at Fielder's Mill, in Talbot County, which is one of the few historic, operational, grist mills in the state of Georgia. They have three children.



Speaking to the Masses

Communications and Marketing Ramps Up Ads

As one of Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency's (GVRA) nine Administrative Offices, the Office of Communications and Marketing is here to serve and support the programs and has kept busy producing more resources for you to pass on to your clients.

You may already be familiar with our radio and television advertisements, produced through the Georgia Association of Broadcasters' (GAB) Public Education Partnership (PEP). Our television ad is client-focused, inviting people with disabilities interested in beginning or advancing careers, to connect with GVRA via the website's local office directory or our Customer Care telephone number.



It currently airs across twenty-two major network affiliates statewide. In addition, a new radio ad premiered October 1, appealing to parents of transition-age youth navigating the often-intimidating process of helping their students plan beyond high school.

In advertising, GVRA is committed to transparency and good stewardship of funds, which makes PEP a perfect fit. At the conclusion of each broadcast quarter, GAB shares reports which ensure our \$8 thousand monthly is wisely invested in radio advertising. At the conclusion of the last quarter of State Fiscal Year 2017, GAB reported our ad placement across 159 stations statewide equaled a commercial

value of \$147,574.00, for our investment of just \$24 thousand over the quarter. The chart below shows the monetary value of our airtime for each month.

SFY Q4 Radio Advertisement Return on Investment

Month	Total Spots	Investment	Airtime Value
April	1,102	\$8k	\$39,438.80
May	1,094	\$8k	\$54,085.00
June	1,362	\$8k	\$54,050.20
Total	3,558	\$24k	\$147,574.00

We've also entered the realm of digital advertising for the first time in GVRA history. In September, we began promoting employer and civic leader buy-in at GeorgiaTrend.com, capitalizing on the momentum of an ever-growing labor market and workforce development community. In November, another series of digital ads will launch in the Atlanta Business Chronicle's online publication, via an opportunity that will yield a chance to connect with more than 53 thousand readers monthly.



Finally, GVRA is pleased to highlight our partnership with Sodexo in the first of an upcoming series of Employer Spotlight videos. Sodexo, which proudly employs multiple former GVRA clients across the hospitality, human services and food service industry, recently received the Georgia Rehabilitation Association's Employer of the Year Award, after being nominated by the Employment Services team. Learn more about how they promote an inclusive culture in our upcoming project.



New Grants Manager

Welcome Joycelyn Fowler to the GVRA Family

Joycelyn Fowler is a native of Atlanta and has been a grants administrator for over 15 years. She began her career working in Human Services delivery programs with the Georgia Division of Family and Children Services. She has also worked for Department of Public Health, Department of Human Resources, Department of Human Services, Department of Community Health and the Boys and Girls Clubs of America. During her years of service, she has managed over \$1.5 billion in federal program funds.

Her experience spans all areas of the grant cycle and includes policy development, operationalization, implementation, development of risk assessment tools, programmatic/fiscal monitoring and oversight, systems development,

collaborative relationship development, research and evaluation and data collection and reporting.

In recognition of her accomplishments and dedication to good service for Georgia's citizens, she was awarded the Governor's Commendation of Excellence in Customer Service. In addition, she has over 7 years of experience working with non-profit organizations funding and developing innovative projects.

Joycelyn is from a long line of educators, entrepreneurs and artists and is herself an accomplished vocalist and proponent of the use of the arts as a tool for teaching and healing. She currently resides in Atlanta with her husband Joseph.

Raising the Bar

DAS is Having a Banner Year

Here's a brief list of everything that DAS has accomplished in the last year as reported by SSA. Congrats to DAS for a job well done!

Georgia DAS contributed to the Atlanta Region meeting all disability workloads.

DAS has shown exceptional productivity above the regional average and the national average.

It has met accuracy standards and use of the RPC (Request for Program Consultation) process in order to identify and address policy areas needing clarification.

It has continued to focus on quality and training, including conducting extensive

refresher training.

It has processed over 10% more Disability Hearings Unit cases than in FY16, which helps the Social Security Administration reduce overpayments.

It has supported the Atlanta Cooperative Disability Investigations (CDI) unit, a vital part of SSA's anti-fraud efforts.

It has an ongoing partnership with the SSA offices in Georgia, ensuring smooth processing of disability claims.

It has shown continued leadership in developing efficient electronic tools.

